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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: THAILAND OCTOBER 10: COURTS ACTIVE, STREETS QUIET,
ANTICIPATING OCTOBER 13 RALLY

REF: BANGKOK 3059

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The streets of Bangkok stayed quiet October 10 for the third day after the October 7 violence. As on October 9 (reftel), the primary action occurred in the Thai courts, with seven remaining Peoples' Alliance for Democracy (PAD) leaders turning themselves in to police authorities, and the Thai Attorney General forwarding the ruling Peoples' Power Party (PPP) dissolution case to the Constitutional Court for consideration. Expectations are for a quiet weekend, looking ahead to October 13, when PAD leaders have called for a large rally at National Police Headquarters. Embassy has issued a Consular Warden message warning Amcits to stay away from the expected rally area. End Summary.

Action in the Courts: PAD, PPP

¶2. (U) The seven PAD leaders who had not been arrested turned themselves in to police at the Nang Loeng station at 10 am October 10, in the wake of the Appeals Court's October 9 decision to drop the most serious treason/ insurrection charges (reftel). The seven are: Sondhi Limthongkul (the leading PAD figure along with MGEN Chamlong); Somkiat Phongpaiboon (also a Democrat Party MP); Phiphop Thongchai; Somsak Kosaisuk; Suriyasai Kataila (PAD lead coordinator); Thoetphum Chaidi; and Amon Amonrattananon (seen as the leader of the August 26 PAD assault on the NBT TV station). Three senators used their status as guarantors, along with MP Somkiat, for the posting of bail; the police approved the bail request in short order and ordered the PAD leaders to report again October 24.

¶3. (SBU) Separately on October 10, the Attorney General's office filed a party dissolution lawsuit against the PPP with the Constitutional Court. The PPP lawsuit joins previously filed lawsuits against Chat Thai and Mattchima, both coalition parties. Most commentators expect it will take several months for the Constitutional Court to hold hearings and consider the material in the three cases. The formal lodging of the PPP dissolution lawsuit will add to public impressions that the current Somchai administration will be a short-lived one.

Anticipating an October 13 rally against the police

¶4. (SBU) Attention now shifts forward, to Monday October 13.

PAD leader Phiphop confirmed to us that the PAD are summoning supporters to rally at the National Stadium around 0900 to march to the Police Department on Rama I Rd. The rally at National Police Headquarters will protest the October 7 use of force and the resulting injuries/deaths. (Note: As of early October 10, 29 individuals, including one policeman, remain hospitalized in four hospitals. Two civilians remain in critical condition, including one PAD supporter with extensive head injuries whom doctors give only a five percent chance of recovery).

15. (SBU) PAD feels buoyed by an Administrative Court ruling late October 9 ordering the police to follow international protocols in limiting the use of force to disperse crowds, starting with softer methods of crowd control. Despite evidence that PAD supporters also used weapons and initiated clashes later on October 7, public sentiment continues to run strongly against the police, who traditionally have garnered the lowest trust ratings of any public institution in Thai opinion polls. The repeated use of "Black October" in media coverage, and the focus on images of the police action against PAD protesters early on the morning of October 7, is a conscious evocation of October 14, 1973 and October 6, 1976 when security forces bloodily suppressed pro-democracy demonstrators in the streets of Bangkok. Those dates are touchstone incidents in modern Thai history, and lumping this week's events under the "Black October" rubric is powerful even though the circumstances of this October's events are very different. Septel explores media coverage and public sentiment in greater detail.

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16. (SBU) Because of the potential for renewed clashes during the October 13 rally, Embassy has issued a Consular Warden message warning Amcits to stay away from the expected rally area.
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